

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1 - 29. (Cancelled)

30. (Previously Presented) An apparatus for slitting and merging ribbons from a preprinted paper web so that the ribbons can be superposed one on top of the other and synchronized to one another for simultaneous severing at a single cutting station, said apparatus comprising:

a slitting station configured to slit the paper web into at least first and second ribbons;

a turnbar roller angled with respect to a downstream direction of travel of the paper web, wherein the first ribbon is wrapped around the turnbar roller for laterally shifting the first ribbon, whereby the first and second ribbons are superposed one above the other downstream of said slitting station;

a ribbon drive station configured to draw the web and first and second ribbons in the downstream direction of travel;

a single cutting station configured to simultaneously cut the superposed first and second ribbons; and

a take up mechanism positioned between the slitting station and cutting station for substantially duplicating the path length of the second ribbon relative to the first ribbon without lateral displacement of the second ribbon, said take up mechanism comprising:

an upper take up roller positioned perpendicularly to the direction of movement of the second ribbon; and

a lower take up roller lying forward of the upper take up roller and positioned perpendicularly to the direction of movement of the second ribbon and parallel to the upper take up roller, said second ribbon passing under the lower take up roller and extending around the upper take up roller, wherein the upper and lower take up rollers are biased apart for tensioning the second ribbon, and wherein at least one of the upper take up roller and the lower take up roller is adjustable in a horizontal direction for adjusting the path length of the second ribbon relative to the first ribbon while minimizing the vertical height of the apparatus.

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31. (Cancelled)